MARVEL

"Allen and Peralta have created a compelling and visually stunning world that promises exciting adventures to come." – THE COMIC BOOK DISPATCH

MAGIK

UNLEASHED

ASHLEY ALLEN GERMÁN PERALTA ARTHUR HESLI

"Fans of supernatural super heroes and intense combat will find plenty to enjoy."
- AIPT

...I DO NEED ONLY ONE MORE MUTANT TO BREAK THE *SEAL*.
YOU WON'T RUN LIKE THE *OTHERS*, WILL YOU? THEY FELL FOR MY *TRICKS*, BUT A CHALLENGE WOULD BE A *FITTING* END TO MY WORK.
I WISH YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO *GLIMPSE* WHAT'S BEYOND *HIS CHAINS*.
BUT UNFORTUNATELY--

THE MYSTIC MUTANT GOES DEMON HUNTING!

THE X-MAN ILYANNA RASPUTINA STRIKES OUT on her own with new allies and dark powers arrayed against her. Something ancient has awakened beneath the Alaskan ice. Unfortunately for it, that's Magik's territory now! Meanwhile, demons have been hunting mutants abroad — and as Ilyanna begins a search for answers, she and her ally Cal must dive deep into the Tokyo underground. But who is watching Magik from backstage? And has Cal teamed up with Earth's best chance against the demon invasion — or its prophesized leader? Magik will finally meet the demons' leader — but who, or what, is Liminal? And when this confrontation plays out, will Ilyanna be able to suppress her darker impulses?

COLLECTING *MAGIK (2025) #1-5* — BY ASHLEY ALLEN, GERMÁN PERALTA AND ARTHUR HESLI.

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MARVEL

MAGIK

UNLEASHED

The island-nation of **KRAKOA** was a safe haven for all mutants. But now that it is no more, mutants find themselves once again displaced across the globe — with **MAGIK** and the **X-MEN** pushing back against an unjust world.

BORN A MUTANT, RAISED IN LIMBO, ILLYANA RASPUTINA BALANCES UNLIKE WORLDS EVERY DAY. ARMED WITH HER SOULSWORD, HER TELEPORTING MUTANT STEPPING DISCS AND INCREDIBLE MYSTIC POWERS, SHE IS WHAT MONSTERS FEAR!

MAGIK

ILLYANA

UNLEASHED

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#1

"THE THREADS THAT BIND"

JUNEAU, ALASKA.

PANT
PANT
PANT

REN!
REN! WAKE UP!
SOMEONE PLEASE--

THUD

NO! HELP! HELP ME!

SKRTCH

I'M NOT READY. I DON'T WANT TO--

SKRTCH

CLK

MONI?

I USED TO DWELL ON WHAT MY LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE WITHOUT *WASTING* MY CHILDHOOD IN THE ETERNAL HELLSCAPE OF LIMBO.

I HOPE IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS--PEACEFUL, IDYLLIC AND BRIGHT. A FEELING OF *HOPE*...WITHOUT ITS PRECEDING SORROW.

WHEN I WAS *KIDNAPPED* BY THE DEMON BELASCO, I THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS OVER.

HE SAW MY POTENTIAL AND HUNGERED TO INFLUENCE MY POWER. HE PLANTED A SEED OF EVIL IN MY SOUL AND *FORCED* IT TO GROW.

YET I *HOPED*. AND I MANAGED TO FINALLY ESCAPE, BECOMING A NEW MUTANT. AN X-MAN.

I BECAME *MORE* THAN WHAT HE PUSHED ME INTO.

I *WON*. AND I BURIED MY DEMONS IN MY PAST.

WILL YOU DO THE SAME TO KRAKOA, ILLYANA?

MY BROTHER, ALWAYS THE *WORST* TIME WITH YOU. THIS IS MY DREAM, PIOTR. I WILL DO AS I PLEASE.

WHAT ABOUT ME? WILL YOU AVOID ME TOO?

WHAT IS THERE TO AVOID? I AM NO LONGER QUEEN OF LIMBO.

I HAVE *DIVORCED* MYSELF FROM THAT REALM. IT'S *OVER*.

IT IS OVER.

IT WAS OVER THE MINUTE YOU FREED YOURSELF FROM YOUR PRISON, ILLYANA.

HOW SELFISH OF YOU.

LIMBO WAS MERELY OUR GENESIS. YOU'RE RIGHT.

THE FACTORY. X-MEN HQ. MERLE, ALASKA.

WE CAN BECOME SOMETHING MORE...

PANT PANT

PANT

MAGNETO WAS RIGHT

DARKCHILD HAUNTS ME. IN KRAKOA, SHE WAS QUIET, BELASCO'S INFLUENCE A DISTANT MEMORY. I BELIEVED HER CONTROL OVER ME WAS GONE.

BUT THIS IS THE *THIRD* TIME THIS WEEK. THE SAME DREAM. THE SAME MISTAKE.

THE SAME *ENDING.*

YES, LIMBO FORGED ME INTO SOMETHING STRONGER. BUT AT WHAT COST?

WHAT WIRES GET *CROSSED* IN THE NAME OF EVOLUTION? WHAT *PATTERNS* DO WE LEARN TO SURVIVE?

I THOUGHT I'D MANAGED TO UNTANGLE THOSE THREADS. BUT OPENING MYSELF UP-- *SOFTENING* MYSELF-- COST ME MY HOME...

...YET, SELFISHLY, I *LIKED* WHO I WAS BECOMING.

HOWEVER, I ***WON'T*** MAKE THAT SAME MISTAKE AGAIN. NOT IF IT COSTS THE X-MEN *THEIR* NEW START.

SURPRISE!

YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD AVOID ***ANOTHER*** YEAR CELEBRATING, DID YOU?

I JUST KNOW *KITTY* HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS.

COME ON, 'YANA. MAKE A WISH!

JUGGERNAUT, I--

IN MOMENTS LIKE THIS, I AM *WEAK*. HOW *EASY* WOULD IT BE TO BLOW OUT THE CANDLE? TO GO BACK TO THE WAY THINGS WERE?

ANOTHER YEAR OLDER, YET THE SAME CONVERSATIONS WITH MYSELF.

WEAR THE HAT AT LEAST FOR THE PHOTO! DO YOU KNOW HOW *EARLY* WE HAD TO WAKE UP TO PLAN THIS?

EVIDENTLY NOT THAT EARLY, QUENTIN. YOU MADE PANCAKES. I *DESERVE* AT LEAST A CAKE.

SOMEONE'S *GRUMPY*. WHAT? ARE YOU HAVING A QUARTER-LIFE CRISIS?

SOME OF US ACTUALLY WORK. MUTANTS ARE DISAPPEARING IN JUNEAU. THAT CAN'T WAIT.

THE ONES WHO *JUST* POPPED UP ON THE MONITOR FIVE MINUTES AGO?

BUT YOU'LL MISS YOUR PARTY.

I THINK THAT'S THE POINT, IDIE.

CYCLOPS, YOU *CAN'T* BE SERIOUS! WHAT ABOUT TEAM BONDING? THAT'S YOUR %#%$.

LET HER GO. IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME ILLYANA HAS FLED TO BE ALONE...

"...IT WON'T BE THE LAST."

I'M SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS, MR. AND MRS. MARKOWITZ.

I KNOW MY GRANDSON CAL AND MONI WERE SUCH GOOD FRIENDS.

THANK YOU FOR HOSTING A MUTANT FUNERAL, AGNES, AT SUCH A TENSE TIME. IT'S HARD TO NOT HAVE CLOSURE.

THEY STILL HAVEN'T FOUND HER *BODY*. NOT THAT *THEY* LOOKED VERY LONG...

NO MUTIES

NO MUTIES

THIS IS WHAT YOU MUTIES GET FOR CAUSING TROUBLE! YOU BROUGHT A MONSTER INTO TOWN!

OUR FAMILIES AREN'T *SAFE* WITH YOU HERE!!!

SHUT UP! HAVE SOME RESPECT!

THESE PEOPLE KNEW MONI. THEY *LOVED* MONI. WHAT HAPPENED, REN?

HER *X-GENE* MANIFESTED AFTER YOU LEFT FOR BOARDING SCHOOL. THAT'S WHEN IT *ALWAYS* CHANGES.

OH, HEY, NO, REN. IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.

NO, YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND*, CAL. THEY HATE MUTANTS. THEY HATE *ME*. MY FRIEND IS *DEAD*. AND *NO ONE* CARES.

MONI AND I *KNEW* WE COULD BE NEXT. AND TO THINK THEY'RE BLAMING IT ON A MONSTER. PATHETIC.

THERE'S *ANOTHER* ONE!

HEY, GET OFF HIM!

WHAT A *WARM* WELCOME. I'M TOUCHED.

ANOTHER ONE! YOU'LL GET OUT OF TOWN IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YA!

THE MAGIC I LEARNED IN LIMBO BEGS TO BE UNLEASHED. BUT I KNOW HOW THEY SEE ME.

DESPITE THEM BEING THE ONES WHO SCREAM AT *ME*.

YOU MIGHT WANT TO BACK UP A BIT.

YOU SAW HER TELEPORT. SHE'LL MARK YOU NEXT AND YOU'LL *DISAPPEAR* INTO THE WOODS!

THEN LET'S GET THIS DEMON BEFORE IT GETS US!!!

I AM *NO* DEMON.

AHHHHHHHH!

BUT THEY ARE.

STRANGE. WHO WOULD SUMMON DEMONS TO JUNEAU?

NOW WOULD YOU *LIKE* MY HELP? OR SHOULD I GET LOST?

I'M FINE WITH *EITHER.*

MY ***SOULSWORD*** IS THE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF MY SOUL, CUTTING THROUGH ALL ***MAGIC.***

THESE DEMONS SERVE ONE PURPOSE-- TARGET PRACTICE.

PFFT... CYCLOPS WANTED ME TO CELEBRATE WITH *PANCAKES.*

AND MISS OUT ON ALL THIS FUN?

THEY FEAR MY *X-GENE*, YET MY *STEPPING DISCS* WILL BE THE THING TO *TELEPORT* THEM TO SAFETY. HOWEVER, THEY DO REQUIRE A MIDWAY POINT...

...I HOPE THEY ENJOY A SMALL GLIMPSE OF LIMBO.

AHHHHHH!

YOU'RE WELCOME.

STAY BACK!

SEE? WE WERE RIGHT! THEY'RE ONLY GOING AFTER THE *MUTANTS!*

PLEASE MR. CARTER! COME ON, WE HAVE TO GO!

YOU WANT HER? HAVE HER!

!

IT'S *BEGUN.* WE CAN'T LET IT TAKE HER.

REN!

IF IT WANTS A MUTANT--

--I'LL GIVE IT A MUTANT.

=WHEEZE=

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT. CATCH YOUR BREATH. I *WON'T* LET ANYTHING ELSE HAPPEN TO YOU.

=SOB=

OR HIM?

HOW COULD I HAVE *MISSED* ANOTHER PERSON BEING TAKEN? I'M LUCKY IT WASN'T WORSE. THAT HE WASN'T *DEAD*.

SHHH, IT'S OKAY. I'M HERE TO *HELP*.

...REALLY?

HAHA...

YOU'LL *REALLY* HELP ME?

WELL, SINCE YOU SO *KINDLY* OFFERED...

...I DO NEED ONLY ONE MORE MUTANT TO BREAK THE *SEAL*.

YOU WON'T RUN LIKE THE *OTHERS*, WILL YOU? THEY FELL FOR MY *TRICKS*, BUT A CHALLENGE WOULD BE A *FITTING* END TO MY WORK.

I WISH YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO *GLIMPSE* WHAT'S BEYOND *HIS CHAINS*.

BUT UNFORTUNATELY--

--YOU WON'T HAVE A *CHANCE* TO SEE IT!

BANG

AAH!

DRIP

FWISH

YOU WANT A CHALLENGE?

I'D BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO OBLIGE--

BURST

BANG

PT PT PT PT

ARGH!

NO, IT *CAN'T* BE.

WHEN I SAW HER IN TOWN, I FEARED THE *WORST*. TO NOW SEE HER AT THIS GRAVE...

WE NEED TO *STRENGTHEN* THE SEAL BEFORE IT FALLS. ANY MORE ENERGY SACRIFICED, AND *LIMINAL* IS FREE.

LIMINAL? SEALS? YOU'RE SPEAKING NONSENSE, GRANDMA.

IF THE GIRL IS HERE, THAT MEANS TWO PROPHECIES ARE COLLIDING. *NEITHER* CAN BE FULFILLED.

CENTURIES AGO, OUR ANCESTORS PLACED FIVE SEALS TO TRAP THE ENTITY KNOWN AS LIMINAL. IF ALL FIVE BREAK, HIS CHAOS WILL BE RELEASED ONTO THIS WORLD.

WAIT, HOLD UP! THIS IS *INSANE!* WHAT IS GOING--?

BANG

GET TO THE SEAL, CALLEN.

NOW.

UNFORTUNATELY, I CANNOT *DELAY* ANY LONGER.

A BLESSING FOR YOU. NOW YOU *MIGHT* SURVIVE TO SEE WHAT IS BEYOND.

NO! STAY BACK!

HAHAHA!

SHEEE

MY TURN.

AHHHHH!

NOT EVEN *WORTH* THE EFFORT.

POOR, *PATHETIC* ILLYANA. WAS HOLDING US BACK *WORTH* IT FOR YOUR SILLY LITTLE MORALS?

WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?

WHO *ELSE* WILL YOU LET DIE?

BIG

EXPLODE

DIE.

WE NEED THE *PHYSICAL* TO BIND IT. GRAB THE VETIVER I KEEP IN MY BAG.

BIND IT? IT JUST *KILLED* REN! WE NEED TO RUN!

CAL. GRAB THE GREEN PLANT IN THE FRONT POCKET.

THAT BEAST HAS COLLECTED ENOUGH ENERGY. THESE *WARDS* WILL BE THE ONLY THING TO STOP THE SEAL FROM FAILING.

I DO NOT KNOW IF THE OTHER *FOUR* HAVE ALREADY BEEN DESTROYED.

OUR FAMILY WAS CHARGED WITH PROTECTING THIS SEAL. THAT DUTY WAS TO PASS TO YOU WHEN YOU CAME OF AGE.

ONCE YOU COULD BE *TRAINED* IN OUR SOCIETY'S WAYS. TO BE ENTRUSTED WITH PREVENTING THE *APOCALYPSES* THAT PLAGUE OUR WORLD.

IT IS NOT FAIR TO YOU, CAL. I THOUGHT I HAD MORE TIME TO EXPLAIN. TO GIVE YOU A CHILDHOOD.

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN TODAY, BUT *REMEMBER* THIS-- BE WARY OF THAT WOMAN.

BUT SHE'S HELPING US?

YOU CANNOT TRUST THE *DARKCHILD.*

I WILL MAKE YOU SUFFER.

WE WILL MAKE HIM PAY.

BANG

SPLIT

HE WILL JUST BE THE BEGINNING.

AND AFTER--

NOTHING WILL HOLD ME BACK.

BANG

--NOTHING WILL HOLD US BACK.

BURST

GET CLOSER, ILLYANA. LET ME TAKE OVER. GIVE ME YOUR BURDEN.

YOU HAVE *MAGIC* TOO, DON'T YOU, GIRL?

STOP SWINGING YOUR SWORD AROUND LIKE A *BRUTE* AND USE YOUR HEAD!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHY DID YOU STOP?

SHE IS RIGHT. I AM NO BRUTE. YOU ALWAYS MAKE ME *FORGET* THAT. LOSE *CONTROL*.

NO LONGER.

IF HE WIELDS MAGIC, LET ME DO THE SAME.

SILENCE.

REMOVE THE VERBAL COMPONENT TO THE SPELL.

NEUTRALIZE THE THREAT.

THIS IS INFURIATING. I TIRE OF THESE GAMES.

YOUR FAMILY WILL IMPRISON MY MASTER NO LONGER.

BURST.

BANG

UNGH!

GRANDMA!

FLIMSY RUNES CANNOT STOP ME. THEY CANNOT STOP THE WILL OF *LIMINAL*.

THE FIRST SEAL IS BROKEN. HIS CONTROL WILL SPREAD.

YOU *LOSE*.

$%#%.

AHHHHHH

AS LONG AS I FOCUS, I CAN KEEP THE MAGIC CONTAINED. BUT IT'S A WEIGHT ON MY SHOULDERS. AND SOON, MY STRENGTH WILL FALTER.

I NEED TO FIND THE ENTITY BEHIND THIS BEFORE ANY MORE SEALS ARE DESTROYED. THIS BARRIER WILL NOT LAST INDEFINITELY.

KRACKLE

EVERYTHING'S OUT OF BALANCE. TWO ARE DEAD.

BUT ISN'T THIS *YOUR* DEFAULT STATE? STOP FIGHTING.

AND ACCEPT IT.

PLEASE, NO. DON'T LEAVE ME. =SOB= DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE.

YOU *PROMISED* TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.

WHAT *RIGHT* DO I HAVE TO COMFORT? *ACTION* IS ALL THAT MATTERS NOW.

I LET REN DIE. I LET MY *ONLY* FAMILY DIE.

THESE *NOTES* ARE ALL I HAVE LEFT OF MY *GRAND-MOTHER.*

HER LAST *WISH* FOR ME TO DECIPHER...

THAT THING-- WHATEVER IT IS-- WILL *NEVER* HURT ANYONE AGAIN. I WON'T LET IT.

NO. *ABSOLUTELY* NOT. I WILL TAKE CARE OF *EVERYTHING.* YOU WILL STAY WHERE IT'S *SAFE.*

SAFE? I WON'T BE *SAFE* UNTIL THAT THING IS DESTROYED.

YOU HEARD IT--IT *HATES* MY FAMILY. THE ONLY THING *BETWEEN* ME AND IT ARE THESE "SEALS."

BESIDES, HOW CAN I *TRUST* YOU? YOU LET THIS ONE FALL.

I'M COMING WITH YOU. AND I'M NOT LETTING *YOU* OR THIS *JOURNAL* OUT OF MY SIGHT.

HE'S SO *YOUNG*. HE'S GOING TO GET HIMSELF KILLED. HE'S *DETERMINED* TO.

THIS IS MY *MISTAKE* TO FIX.

ILLYANA RASPUTIN. MY TEAMMATES CALL ME *MAGIK*.

CALLEN ISAACS...

AFTER ALL, I'VE MADE *WORSE* DEALS BEFORE.

Darkchild unleashed

THE DARKCHILD...SO THAT'S HER NAME. HOW INTERESTING.

WILL SHE POSE A THREAT? OR BECOME A GIFT?

NO MATTER. WE'LL HAVE *FUN* EITHER WAY.

#1 Foil Variant by **DIKE RUAN** & **MORENO DINISIO**

#2

"DESCENT"

THREE DAYS POST JUNEAU.

THE NEXT *SEAL* HAS TO BE HERE. I JUST *KNOW* IT. MY GRANDMA WAS USING SOME SORT OF PORTA-CIPHER. BUT WHAT'S THE KEYWORD?

IS THIS HERE A TRACKING SPELL? *UGH*, HOW IS ANYONE SUPPOSED TO UNDERSTAND THIS?

I CAN TAKE A LOOK--

NO! I CAN *DO* THIS.

MEEOW

STOP THAT.

TOKYO, JAPAN.

LIMINAL COULD BE DAYS AWAY FROM BREAKING THE FIVE SEALS AND REGAINING HIS FREEDOM.

WHY ARE WE *WASTING* TIME, ILLYANA?

YOU *REFUSED* TO GO SIGHTSEEING, CAL. I MADE THE EXECUTIVE DECISION AND TOOK YOU SOMEWHERE MORE FUN.

I HAVE A MISSION.

I HAVE A MISSION--STOP THE DEMONS ATTACKING MUTANTS.

YOU ARE TAGGING ALONG.

I UNDERSTAND YOUR ANGER. BUT I'D FEEL BETTER IF YOU STAYED HERE.

=SCOFF= MY GRANDMOTHER TRUSTED *ME* WITH THIS.

CAL WANTS TO THROW HIMSELF INTO *ADULTHOOD*. I KNOW HE IS NOT READY FOR THIS WORLD.

SHE WOULD WANT YOU *SAFE*.

BUT HE DOES NOT TRUST ME. AND I DO NOT BLAME HIM.

DARKCHILD--MY DARKER HALF--SIMMERS BENEATH MY SKIN, WAITING FOR MY WALLS TO BREAK LIKE THEY DID IN JUNEAU.

I CANNOT GIVE IT A *SECOND* OPPORTUNITY TO EMERGE.

LET ME SEARCH THE CITY.

REN WOULD HAVE LOVED THIS. SHE *HATED* JUNEAU. ALWAYS WANTED TO LEAVE.

SHE WAS GOING TO PURSUE *MUSIC*. SHE WOULD HAVE MADE IT TOO IF SHE HADN'T...

I *KNOW* SHE WAS KILLED BY LIMINAL'S DEMONS. IT'S JUST HARD TO *ACCEPT* THAT MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND IS GONE.

I MISS THEM BOTH. WHEN MY PARENTS DIED, MY GRANDMA TOOK ME IN WITH NO HESITATION.

SHE SAVED UP SO I COULD GO TO A BOARDING SCHOOL OUT EAST. JUST BECAUSE I SAID I WAS INTERESTED IN TECH.

SHE--SHE SACRIFICED *EVERYTHING* IN THE END FOR ME.

HOW MANY MONTHS DID I MISS BY LEAVING HER? HOW MANY TIMES DID I BRUSH OFF HER STORIES AS OLD WIVES' TALES?

SHE PROBABLY THOUGHT I WAS SO NAIVE. PURSUING *SCIENCE* WHEN MAGIC EXISTED.

YOU KNOW, TECH AND MAGIC AREN'T SO DIFFERENT. YOU WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST TO STUDY THEIR INTERSECTION.

REALLY?

I COULD SHOW YOU... *IF* YOU LET ME LOOK AT THE JOURNAL.

OH MY GOSH, WOULD YOU QUIT IT?

〈CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING ELSE?〉*

〈NO, THANK YOU. WE'RE GOOD.〉

〈OKAY, WELL, I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW I'M OFF SOON.〉

〈OKAY. CONGRATS.〉

*TRANSLATED FROM JAPANESE.

〈UM. THERE'S A CONCERT HAPPENING TONIGHT. SUPER HUSH-HUSH BUT OPEN TO *EVERYONE*.〉

〈YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY YES--*AHH*, SORRY, I DON'T DO THIS A LOT--BUT WOULD YOU WANT TO GO CHECK IT OUT WITH ME?〉

Haruhi
〈SORRY, WE'RE A LITTLE BUSY... HARUHI.〉
AND THAT'S AN UNDERSTATEMENT.
WAIT. IS THAT DRAWING...?
〈IT'S A COOL VENUE. THE BAND JUST POPPED UP OUT OF NOWHERE A FEW DAYS AGO.〉
〈I HOPE THEY LAST THOUGH... ESPECIALLY WITH ALL THE DISAPPEARANCES THAT HAVE BEEN HAPPENING AROUND THE AREA.〉
〈DISAPPEARANCES?〉
SASH
〈YEAH, BUT NOTHING'S CONFIRMED.〉
MAYBE WE WILL GET TO GO SIGHTSEEING.
〈AND YOU'RE OFF YOUR SHIFT?〉
〈OH! UM, YEAH, IN A FEW HOURS?〉
〈GREAT! CAN'T WAIT.〉

TWO HOURS LATER.

ПРИВЕТ, МЫ ТУТ!

<I THINK I'M GOING TO BE SICK.>

<SO, NO FIVE-STAR REVIEW? YOU SAID YOU WANTED A QUICK RIDE TO THE CONCERT.>

<SORRY THAT MY MUTANT STEPPING DISKS AREN'T MADE TO BE A TELEPORTATION TAXI.>

NOW, LET'S FIND OUR SEAL.

REVEAL.

BUZZZZ

THERE'S A STRANGE HUMMING IN THE AIR.

SO YOU CAN SENSE IT?

NO-- I CAN'T SEE *ANYTHING*.

AND ISN'T THAT ODD?

SOMETHING'S *BLOCKING* ME FROM TRACING THE MAGICAL THREADS.

WE NEED TO SWEEP THE VENUE. THERE MIGHT BE TECH INHIBITING MY SPELL--

AAAH!

WATCH IT!

WELCOME, EVERYONE! I'M SO GLAD YOU COULD JOIN US.

IS THAT...?

THAT CAN'T BE...

IT'S GOING TO BE A *ROWDY* SHOW TONIGHT. BUT I'M SURE THAT'S WHAT *LURED* YOU OUT.

AND LUCKY FOR YOU, YOU GET TO BE PART OF ONE LAST SHOW. ONE LAST *SACRIFICE.*

REN?!

STRUM

OH NO...

LOOK OUT!!!

SLICE

THAT'S DEFINITELY NOT REN.

IS IT POSSESSION? A MIMIC? WHAT COULD BE AMPLIFYING HER POWERS?

CAL! GET OUT OF HERE AND RUN!

SNARL

NOOO!

WHATEVER IS AFFECTING MY MAGIC IS ALSO AFFECTING MY PORTALS. I'M OFF-BALANCE. I CAN'T--I *CAN'T* MANIFEST MY STEPPING DISCS.

%@#%!

CRACKLE

AGAIN, MUTANTS ARE BEING TARGETED. NOT HUMANS. BUT WHY?

THERE'S NO DOUBT REN'S GUITAR IS DISRUPTING MY POWERS. IF I FREE HER FROM THE FORCE CONTROLLING HER, WE CAN EVACUATE THE BUILDING.

MOVE!

OR AT LEAST *CUT* THE STRINGS OF THOSE OTHER DEMONS.

NOW TO FIND THE *SOURCE* OF THE POSSESSION AND SEVER THE THREAD OF MAGIC USING MY SOULSWORD.

SHROUD

BUT WHEN I STARE AT HER SOUL, *SOMETHING* STARES BACK.

THERE'S NOTHING OF REN.

NOTHING. JUST A SMALL FLAME POWERING A VESSEL FOR SOMETHING MUCH LARGER.

ALL THESE DEMONS WERE ONCE MUTANTS. I FEEL SICK.

STRUM

I WON'T FALL FOR THE SAME TRICK TWICE--

STRUM

I CAN'T MOVE?

AUGH!

MOVE! COME ON, MOVE!

THESE *DEATHS* WILL BE ON ME. FOR CHOOSING TO SAVE *ONE* AT THE COST OF MANY.

WHEN THERE IS NOTHING EVEN LEFT TO SAVE OF THIS POOR GIRL.

SOMETHING *CLAWS* AT MY SKIN TO GET OUT. TO ESCAPE.

A PROMISE OF RAGE AND *RETRIBUTION* WAITING TO BE RELEASED INTO REALITY.

LIMINAL'S HONORED TO HAVE YOU FOLLOWING HIS DEMONS AROUND. FIRST, THE GRAVEYARD? NOW THIS? IT'S ALMOST LIKE YOU *WANT* TO WATCH THIS HAPPEN.

OR MAYBE YOU DON'T CARE? YOU *WOULD* HAVE THE STRENGTH TO POSE A CHALLENGE IF YOU TAPPED INTO THAT *FASCINATING* DARKNESS.

NO RESPONSE? *HMM*, I GUESS YOU DON'T ACTUALLY CARE. HOW *CRUEL*.

BUT I UNDERSTAND THE FEELING OF NOT BEING ABLE TO *ESCAPE* YOUR BASE SELF.

SH

LIMINAL ENLIGHTENED ME TO MY POTENTIAL. RETURNED ME TO MY NATURAL STATE.

MAYBE HE CAN DO THE SAME WITH YOU.

DARKCHILD'S POWER SINGS TO BE RELEASED.

AND STUCK HERE, I CAN'T REMEMBER WHY I WOULD RESIST. WITH THIS DARK POWER, I BECOME LIMITLESS. I COULD *DESTROY* EVERYTHING.

BEAUTIFUL. NOW, THAT WASN'T SO *HARD*, WAS IT?

INTERMISSION'S OVER.

SFX: ZIP ZIP

NOPE, NOPE, NOPE, NOPE.

WHAT DID THEY DO TO YOU, REN? YOU USED TO NEVER BE ABLE TO DO THAT. YOU COULD ONLY HIT CERTAIN FREQUENCIES--

SFX: THUD

FREQUENCIES! THAT'S IT! ILLYANA--

EXIT

THE DARKCHILD... NO. NOT NOW.

YOU WILL REGRET TESTING MY PATIENCE. REGRET PLAYING WITH ME.

YOU WILL KNOW THE NAME OF DARKCHILD.

KLANG

KYAAA

ECK!

ZDRAVA

THE SHROUD

LIMBO IS JUST AS MUCH MY *MOTHER TONGUE* AS RUSSIAN. ITS MAGIC FLOWS EVEN EASIER.

THERE WE GO.

AAAAH!

THUD

HARUHI, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

<WE NEED TO LEAVE. SHE'S GOING TO KILL US!>

<THAT BEAST WAS JUST PLAYING AT BEING HUMAN ALL ALONG.>

IGNORE THEM.

NO...NO, THIS ISN'T RIGHT. THIS ISN'T WHAT I WANTED TO HAPPEN. DARKCHILD CLOUDS MY JUDGMENT.

YOU'RE *STALLING.*

YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY TO BREAK THE SEAL YET.

NO!

I'M SORRY FOR LEAVING YOU FOR SO LONG. YOU DID WELL.

I COULD BARELY CAP MY *RAGE*. IF CAL WEREN'T HERE...

HAH. AND YOU WANTED ME TO STAY BEHIND.

THAT'S NOT REN ANYMORE, IS IT?

NO. THERE'S NOTHING MORE I CAN DO.

BUT I--NO, *WE*--WILL DESTROY WHATEVER TRANSFORMED HER. I *PROMISE*.

NOW, WALK ME THROUGH WHAT YOU WERE SAYING.

IT'S SPATIAL FREQUENCIES. AN INVERSE FREQUENCY WILL CANCEL OUT THE WAVELENGTH.

SMART. YOU MIGHT HAVE A KNACK FOR *MAGIC*, CAL.

REALLY?

LIKE YOU SAID...IT'S JUST MATH. DEFINED PRINCIPLES *REALIZED*.

FREQUENCY.

DIVIDED BY VELOCITY.

LET'S GO.

SLASH

AIEEEEEE!

⇒SOB⇐

WE DID IT. OH GOD, WE REALLY DID IT.

BUT REN...SHE'S GONE. WE-- ⇒SOB⇐

⇒PANT⇐

...WHEN I WAS A FEW YEARS YOUNGER THAN YOU, I WAS *FORCED* INTO A HELLISH WORLD I WAS NOT READY FOR.

THE *SUPERNATURAL* IS NOT KIND. AND WHILE IT MIGHT NOT SEEM LIKE IT NOW, YOU *WILL* GET THROUGH THIS.

EVEN THOUGH YOU SHOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN *FORCED* TO HOLD THIS BURDEN.

I NEED TO AVENGE REN. I CAN *DO* THIS.

JUST BECAUSE A CHILD *CAN* PERSEVERE DOES NOT MAKE IT *RIGHT*.

YOU REALLY MEAN THAT...DON'T YOU?

I GAVE IN TO MY INSTINCTS TO WIN. I LOST CONTROL OVER MYSELF. I'M SORRY, CAL, FOR SCARING YOU.

OF COURSE I WAS *TERRIFIED* OF YOU.

...I BET THOSE *DEMONS* WERE TOO.

WHAT--?

MAYBE YOU NEVER WANTED THAT OTHER FORM, BUT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A LOT WORSE IF YOU WEREN'T HERE.

ONLY *YOU* COULD HAVE DONE THAT. MONSTER AND ALL.

YEAH...

YOU KNOW, YOU'RE PRETTY *HARD* ON YOURSELF.

=SNORT= IT COMES WITH THE TERRITORY OF ALWAYS NEEDING TO BE READY FOR THE NEXT THREAT--

ILYANA!

I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE, MAGIK. I WOULD HATE TO DANCE AROUND EACH OTHER ANY LONGER.

MY NAME IS **LIMINAL**, AND YOU AND I ARE GOING TO USHER IN A GLORIOUS, NEW ERA.

#3

"PACTS"

YOU CAN'T KEEP RUNNING AWAY FROM ME, ILLYANA.

I'VE BEEN *TRAPPED* IN LIMINAL'S DOMAIN FOR *WEEKS*, UNABLE TO USE MY PORTALS. BARELY ABLE TO MANAGE THE SIMPLEST OF SPELLS.

HE'S TRIED TO MAKE ME A *HELPLESS* TARGET. UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM, THAT'S *NOT* AN EASY TASK TO ACCOMPLISH.

I JUST WANT TO TALK. YOU OWE ME THAT MUCH IN MY HOME, DARLING.

I OWE YOU *NOTHING.*

=SIGHE IT'S LIKE TRYING TO TALK TO A CHILD.

SNAP

SNAP

GRRWWW4

HOW DID YOU GET IN MY HEAD? HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT *HER?*

CAT--LIMBO'S VERSION OF KITTY PRYDE--HELPED ME *REBEL* AGAINST BELASCO. AND I STILL COULDN'T SAVE HER FROM HIS *DARK MAGIC.**

*AS SEEN IN *MAGIK* (1983) #3! --DS

YOU'RE LIKE AN OPEN BOOK TO ME, ILLYANA. I *UNDERSTAND* YOU...AND YOUR *MISTAKES.*

"YOU PEERED INTO MY *HEAD*. I THOUGHT I'D DO THE SAME TO YOU. A CONNECTION SO *EASILY* FORGED CANNOT BE SO *EASILY* CLOSED."*

I SEE PATTERNS OF YOUR FRIENDS GETTING HURT BY THOSE AROUND YOU. BY *YOURSELF.*

I'VE DONE YOU A FAVOR, TRAPPING YOU HERE. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT ANYMORE OTHER THAN YOURSELF.

I TRY TO IGNORE HIS COMMENTS. BUT FOR WEEKS, HE'S HAUNTED ME WITH THE MANIFESTATIONS OF MY MISTAKES.

YOU'RE WELCOME.

*SEE LAST ISSUE! --DS

WHAT MAGIC DRIVES HIM? I'VE NEVER SEEN A BEING SO INTERTWINED WITH A DOMAIN BEFORE...OTHER THAN MYSELF WITH LIMBO.

IF YOU KNOW ME *SOOO* WELL, YOU'D KNOW I *HATE* BEING TRAPPED.

SCOFF

OH, ILLYANA, YOU WOUND ME. WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS SO COMBATIVE? I JUST WANT TO TALK--

SNAP

FINE. HAVE IT YOUR WAY. I CAN BE YOUR ENEMY IF THAT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER.

PERHAPS A FEW ENEMIES FROM YOUR PAST WILL SUFFICE? I CAN MANIFEST SUCH CONSTRUCTS FROM MY DOMAIN.

YOU SAY YOU LACK THE POWER TO CHANGE YOUR SITUATION. BUT... THAT'S NOT QUITE TRUE. YOU JUST *REFUSE* TO TAP INTO IT.

ARE YOU USED TO FEELING *POWERLESS*, ILLYANA? WHY NOT *CHANGE* THAT?

"YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE THE VICTIM YOU WERE IN LIMBO.

"DARKCHILD--YOUR DEMONIC HALF FORMED IN LIMBO--WOULD HAVE THE STRENGTH TO MOLD REALITY TO YOUR DESIRE."

NO!

I *DO* FEEL POWERLESS. ON EARTH, MY MAGIC WOULD HAVE DESTROYED SUCH HOLLOW SHADES. HERE, I CAN ONLY *MANAGE* TO PUSH THEM BACK.

YET WE ALL HAVE *LIMITATIONS*...

ONLY ATTACKING ME WITH *SIX* CONSTRUCTS? *INSULTING*. I'M *MUCH* MORE OF A THREAT.

UNLESS YOUR POWER IS *LIMITED?*

DON'T MISUNDERSTAND ME. I KNOW YOU'RE A THREAT, ILLYANA. THAT'S WHY I FIND YOU SO *INTRIGUING*.

I'VE SEEN YOU, ILLYANA, AND I KNOW YOU.

I KNOW YOUR BIGGEST FEAR IS THAT NO ONE WILL EVER *UNDERSTAND* YOU. THAT THERE IS SOMETHING *FUNDAMENTALLY* WRONG WITH YOU.

BUT I *UNDERSTAND.*

APPRENTICE.

BELASCO... THE DEMON WHO DRAGGED ME TO HELL.

JUST A *WORD* IN HIS VOICE AND IT FEELS LIKE I NEVER LEFT LIMBO.

WITH MY HELP, YOU CAN FINALLY REST.

BUT I AM NOT A CHILD ANYMORE. AND I DON'T TOLERATE THREATS.

FUNNY. I'VE NEVER BEEN MUCH FOR RESTING.

SNAP

WHILE YOU MIGHT *CONTROL* THIS DOMAIN, YOU AREN'T *OMNISCIENT*. MY MAGICAL POWER MAY BE WEAK, BUT I CAN STILL MANAGE THIS *BASIC SPELL*.

BIND YOUR *CONSCIOUSNESS* TO A SINGLE FORM. *PREVENT* YOUR MEANS OF ESCAPE. HOW DOES IT FEEL BEING UNABLE TO *TRANSFER* YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS TO YOUR *CONSTRUCTS*?

YOU FELL FOR MY TRAP. THERE IS NOWHERE TO HIDE.

AND NOW I'M ON THE ATTACK.

R'A'R'R'R!

YOU CONTINUE TO IMPRESS ME MORE AND MORE.

GAH!

I KNEW YOU'D BE WORTHY.

I ADORE GAMES, BUT YOU CAN STOP HUMORING ME. I TIRE OF THIS CHASE.

I BELIEVE THERE *MIGHT* HAVE BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING.

THE TIME FOR TALK IS OVER.

I'LL EXACT *VENGEANCE* FOR EVERY SINGLE MUTANT YOU'VE *MURDERED*. AND THAT WILL BE JUST THE *BEGINNING*.

MURDERED? AGAIN, YOU MISUNDERSTAND. THEY'RE STILL ALIVE AND WELL, RESTING AS DOLLS IN MY DOMAIN.

THEY'RE HAPPY AND BLANK, READY TO SERVE MY WILL.

LIKE HELL THEY ARE. THEY'RE *DEAD*, LIMINAL. AND YOU CAN'T CHANGE THAT.

LET'S PLAY A *GAME*. I'LL KILL YOU BEFORE YOU KILL ME.

DRIP

HAHAHAHA... KILL YOU? WHY WOULD I WANT TO KILL YOU?

YOU ARE A GIFT TO ME, ILLYANA. ONE THAT I INTEND TO COLLECT.

I AM NO OBJECT. I AM NO TOOL.

HOW DARE HE? HOW DARE BOTH OF THEM.

I DEMAND YOU RELEASE ME.

I'VE BROUGHT DOWN DEMONIC REGIMES BEFORE. YOURS WILL BE NO DIFFERENT.

CALM DOWN. YOU ARE PURPOSELY MISINTERPRETING MY WORDS.

FINE. YOUR CHOICE IS MADE.

WHISH

ENOUGH!

AUGH...

DRIP

DRIP

I NEVER WANTED YOU TO SEE ME LIKE THIS.

I WISHED TO HIDE THE UGLIER PARTS OF MY FORM AND MY MAGIC RESPONDED. SLOWLY REBUILDING MY SHELL, HOWEVER WEAK.

ALAS, SOMETIMES I LOSE MYSELF. I LET MY EMOTIONS GET THE BETTER OF ME.

I'LL TRY NOT TO LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN AROUND YOU, ILLYANA.

IT SEEMS WE'RE AT AN *IMPASSE*. YOU WANT TO LEAVE. I WANT YOU TO STAY.

I'M A REASONABLE MAN. BUT I CANNOT LET YOU GO IF YOU CONTINUE TO THWART THE DESTRUCTION OF MY PRISON'S SEALS.

I SLUMBERED FOR CENTURIES. YET THE *SPEED* OF MODERN LIFE CREATED MORE *LIMINAL* SPACES--MORE SPACES OF TRANSITION. MY *RESTRAINTS* WEAKENED.

AND JUST LIKE THAT, I WOKE UP.

I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU, ILLYANA.

AT FIRST, I WAS ANNOYED. BUT THE MORE I SAW, THE MORE I REALIZED HOW SIMILAR WE ARE.

I'M IMPRESSED. MORE THAN IMPRESSED.

I'M *ENRAPTURED* BY YOU.

"MY PAST IS BLURRY, BUT I REMEMBER, FOR A TIME, IT WAS PEACEFUL, IDYLLIC AND BRIGHT.

"I HAD THOSE WHO CARED FOR ME. YET IT WAS ALL TOO EASY FOR A CHILD TO GO MISSING. AN ACCIDENT TO OCCUR.

"IT WAS A TIME OF MAGIC. OF WONDER. AN ERA OF EXPERIMENTATION... MY STORY IS UNFORTUNATELY NOT UNIQUE.

"THESE MAGES WANTED TO GROW THEIR OWN POWER. ESCAPE THEIR HUMANITY TO ASCEND TO SOMETHING MORE.

"HOWEVER, A RITUAL LIKE THIS REQUIRES SACRIFICE.

"ONE THE MAGES WERE NOT WILLING TO MAKE THEMSELVES.

PLEASE! PLEASE STOP! LET ME GO!

LET ME GO HOME!

"A FORCED SHEDDING OF HUMANITY. MY GENESIS AND MY EVOLUTION."

AHHHHHHHHHH!

I UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCE *INTIMATELY*. WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO *SAVE YOU* AND INSTEAD HAVING TO TAKE ON THAT *BURDEN* YOURSELF.

A MONSTER... OR A CHILD *BEGGING* FOR HELP. GATHERING POWER TO MAKE SURE *NOTHING* EVER HARMS HIM AGAIN.

I HAD OTHERS TO MAKE SURE I DIDN'T FALL TO LIMBO'S HORRORS. YOU HAD NO ONE.

LET ME HELP YOU. WE CAN FIND A WAY FORWARD.

THERE'S NOTHING TO HELP. I DON'T REALLY *REMEMBER* IT.

I WAS *PITIFUL*. NOW I AM SOMETHING *MORE*.

"I EFFECTIVELY BROUGHT ALL LIFE UNDER MY CONTROL. UNTIL A *SOCIETY* OF MAGES BOUND ME.

"WHILE DIFFERENT THAN THE MAGES WHO CREATED ME, THIS *SOCIETY* WAS JUST AS CRUEL.

"I WOKE UP IN THIS REALM. ALONE IN DARKNESS.

"HOWEVER, AS I GREW, MY PRISON BECAME ME AND I, IT. MY MAGIC INTERTWINED WITH MY DOMAIN."

THIS IS WHY YOU STRUGGLE TO USE YOUR POWERS. IT WOULD BE SIMILAR IF I WENT TO YOUR HOME, LIMBO.

LIMBO IS *NOT* MY HOME.

"AND THIS DOMAIN WILL NOT BE MINE FOR MUCH LONGER. I SEE THE KEY TO MY FREEDOM.

"IN MY PAST ATTEMPTS, HUMAN DNA DID NOT YIELD ENOUGH ENERGY TO BREAK MY SEALS. MUTANT DNA HOWEVER...

"WELL, LET'S JUST SAY THEY PROVE USEFUL, WHETHER AS DOLLS OR AS FUEL."

I HAD MY HUMANITY PEELED AWAY TO REVEAL WHO I REALLY WAS UNDERNEATH. I CAN OFFER THE SAME GIFT TO YOU.

I'M LONELY, ILLYANA. I'VE CRAVED SOMEONE WHO COULD UNDERSTAND ME. AND I'M SO LUCKY TO HAVE FOUND *YOU*.

WE DON'T HAVE TO BE ALONE ANYMORE.

I'M HERE NOW. TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A WORLD WHERE WE CAN BE THE ONES IN POWER. WE CAN BE SAFE.

YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN.

I CAN UNDERSTAND.

BUT I CANNOT CONDONE YOUR BEHAVIOR.

STOP LOOKING DOWN ON ME! STOP RESISTING YOUR TRUE SELF.

WE WERE BOTH FORCED INTO DEMONIC DEALS. IF I BECAME THIS...THIS MONSTER, SO WILL YOU. WE'RE THE SAME.

I'M NOTHING IF NOT A TACTICIAN.

FINE. I'LL PLAY YOUR GAME. LET'S TALK.

I KNEW YOU'D SEE REASON. I'LL REWARD YOUR UNDERSTANDING WITH A GIFT. YOUR FREEDOM...FOR A PRICE.

NAME IT.

LET HIM SUGGEST THE COST. I WILL NOT *OFFER* HIM ANYTHING MORE.

THIS IS ALL FOR YOU, ILLYANA. I WANT YOU TO BE YOUR TRUE SELF ON EARTH.

LET ME RELEASE THE CHAINS OF DARKCHILD. THIS WILL BE THE ONLY WAY I'LL ALLOW YOU TO LEAVE.

HA! THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE. MY MENTAL BARRIER AGAINST HER IS TOO STRONG.

OH, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE. I CONTROL MY *PUPPETS* THROUGH MENTAL MEANS. IF YOU *ALLOW* IT, I CAN RIP DOWN YOUR *MENTAL DEFENSES* AGAINST DARKCHILD'S INFLUENCE.

NO.

I'M NOT UNREASONABLE. I WON'T *FORCE* DARKCHILD TO EMERGE.

AFTER ALL, IF YOU *REALLY* ARE IN CONTROL AND SHE ISN'T YOUR *TRUE* SELF, WHAT WORRIES SHOULD YOU HAVE?

I'M WILLING TO PLAY THIS GAME. I KNOW YOU'LL *FAIL* AND COME TO ME WILLINGLY.

BUT I'VE WAITED A *LONG* TIME FOR MY FREEDOM. OUR DEAL WILL LAST FOR *THREE* WEEKS.

YOU STOP ME, I *REMOVE* ANY TRACES LEFT OF DARKCHILD. I WON'T LET YOU KEEP RUNNING.

THIS IS A *BAD DEAL*. BUT WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE?

IF I WIN, I WILL *FINALLY* BE FREED FROM MY PAST AND MY EVIL SELF THAT HAUNTS ME.

ARE YOU *LETTING* ME OUT TO PLAY, ILLYANA? I CAN'T WAIT.

DARKCHILD LOUDER THAN YOU THOUGHT?

I WILL PROVE YOU WRONG, LIMINAL. AND BY THE TIME I'M FINISHED, YOU WILL *BEG* FOR MY MERCY. BEG TO BE *TRAPPED* ONCE MORE.

I'M *GIVING* YOU A CHANCE TO ESCAPE, ILLYANA, BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO COME TO ME WITH YOUR OWN *FREE WILL*.

BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE-- I STILL WANT YOU BY MY SIDE. I DO NOT MIND WAITING.

TOKYO? OH NO. WHERE'S CAL?

I NEED TO FIND HIM. WHAT IF *LIMINAL* GOT HIM?

FWSH

AH!

CAL'S IN... ECUADOR?

WHY IS HE THERE? WHAT HAVE I MISSED?

CLOUD FOREST, ECUADOR.

CAL. OH, THANK GOD.

I'M SO SORRY I LEFT YOU FOR ***WEEKS*** ALONE. I'M SO RELIEVED YOU'RE OKAY.

ILLYANA?! I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN! HOW DID YOU FIND ME?

...I PUT A MAGICAL TRACKER ON YOU IN CASE WE WERE SEPARATED.

WAIT, WHAT?! THAT'S NOT COOL. WHY WOULD YOU--?

WAIT...WEEKS? YOU'VE ONLY BEEN GONE A LITTLE OVER THREE ***DAYS.***

NO, THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT. IT HAD TO BE ***LONGER*** THAN THAT.

SO MUCH HAPPENED. ANOTHER SEAL WAS ***BROKEN.*** LIMINAL'S FIENDS USED YOUR DISAPPEARANCE AS A ***DISTRACTION.***

I WAS ONLY GONE THREE DAYS...AND EVERYTHING STARTED TO *COLLAPSE.*

BUT DON'T WORRY, I ***FOUND*** THE NEXT SEAL. I FLEW HERE ***IMMEDIATELY*** SINCE... SINCE I DIDN'T KNOW HOW LONG YOU'D BE GONE.

I FOUND SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP US. SHE LEFT TO GRAB SUPPLIES, BUT SHE'LL BE BACK SOON.

BUT NOW THAT YOU'RE BACK, I WANT YOU TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE JOURNAL. VERIFY MY WORK.

HE...HE FINALLY TRUSTS ME.

CAL...THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW. I MET LIMINAL, AND TO ESCAPE, I WAS *FORCED* TO MAKE A DEAL.

THE RESTRAINTS ON DARKCHILD HAVE BEEN RELEASED. WE HAVE THREE WEEKS TO DEFEAT LIMINAL BEFORE I AM *FULLY LOST* TO MY DARKER HALF.

OR BEFORE YOU ARE *FOUND* BY YOUR TRUE SELF.

EXCUSE ME?!

I CAN'T BELIEVE *YOU* KEEP MAKING DECISIONS WITHOUT *TALKING* TO ME. FIRST, THE TRACKER. THEN THIS DEAL.

WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT? *WE* COULD HAVE FOUND A DIFFERENT WAY.

I WAS GONE FOR ONLY THREE DAYS AND ANOTHER SEAL FELL. WHAT IF I WAS THERE A WEEK? A MONTH? LIMINAL WOULD HAVE BEEN FREE.

I'M SUCH AN *IDIOT*. MY GRANDMA TOLD ME NOT TO TRUST YOU. I *PURPOSELY* IGNORED IT.

ILLYANA, *WHY* WOULD LIMINAL LET YOU OUT? DID YOU *THINK* ABOUT THAT?

I COULDN'T STAY *TRAPPED* THERE. I *REFUSE* TO BE TRAPPED ANY LONGER.

BUT NOW YOU'RE *TRAPPED* IN THIS DEAL!

AM I INTERRUPTING SOMETHING?

DANI?!

HI, ILLYANA... WHAT HAVE YOU GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO THIS TIME?

DANI MOONSTAR-- MIRAGE. FORMER LEADER OF THE NEW MUTANTS. ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS.

AND THE LAST PERSON I WANTED TO RUN INTO.

#4

"REUNION"

CLOUD FOREST, ECUADOR.

GIVE IT UP, ILLYANA. WE HAVE TO *TALK* ABOUT THIS. YOU'VE NEVER BEEN GOOD AT THE SILENT TREATMENT.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?

OH, DANI! MY HERO! THANKS FOR SAVING ME. YOU KNOW I COULDN'T HANDLE THIS BY MYSELF.

NO NEED TO GET SNIPPY. I'M ONE OF YOUR OLDEST FRIENDS, YANA. NOT YOUR ENEMY.

I'M *ENTITLED* TO MY OPINION ABOUT YOUR DEAL WITH LIMINAL.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WOULD ALLOW HIM TO DESTROY YOUR MENTAL BARRIERS AGAINST *DARKCHILD*.

IT LET YOU ESCAPE HIS DOMAIN, BUT HE ONLY GAVE YOU THREE WEEKS TO STOP HIM. THAT'S NOT ENOUGH TIME--

YOU STILL DON'T *TRUST* ME! AFTER ALL THESE YEARS!

I DON'T TRUST DARKCHILD! YOU FORGET THAT I'VE BEEN HERE FROM THE *BEGINNING*. I'VE SEEN WHAT THAT DEMON CAN DO.

WHAT IT DOES TO YOU.

HELP ME UNDERSTAND. WASN'T THERE ANOTHER WAY? IF YOU HAD STAYED IN LIMINAL'S REALM JUST A BIT LONGER--

SO YOU *WANT* ME TO STAY TRAPPED--?!

ON YOUR RIGHT.

NO! THAT'S *NOT* WHAT I'M SAYING. BUT IF YOU HAD TAKEN MORE TIME, THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A LOOPHOLE--

I WILL *NEVER* BE TRAPPED AGAIN. I REFUSE.

YOU *HAVE* BEEN THERE SINCE THE BEGINNING, DANI. SO YOU KNOW THAT'S *UNFAIR* OF YOU TO ASK OF ME.

GUILT BUILDS IN MY STOMACH. BOTH FOR MY *TREATMENT* OF DANI AND FOR MAKING THIS DEAL WITH LIMINAL.

I KNOW I'M BEING *UNFAIR*, BUT I CAN'T LET DANI SEE THAT DARKCHILD'S STRENGTH *PERSISTS*.

EVEN WITHOUT HER PSYCHIC POWERS, SHE HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN ABLE TO SEE THROUGH ME, WHETHER ON THE NEW MUTANTS OR NOW.

I CANNOT FALTER.

YET DARKCHILD'S REINS ARE GONE, AND HER ANGER--*MY* ANGER--HAS NEVER FELT SO HOT.

YOU KEEP *PURPOSELY* MISINTERPRETING MY WORDS!

I LOVE YOU, YANA, BUT YOU CAN'T SHUT *ME* OUT JUST BECAUSE *YOU'RE* SHUTTING DOWN.

I TOLD *CYCLOPS* THAT I DON'T NEED A BABYSITTER. I CAN GET TO LIMINAL'S SEAL AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN BY MYSELF.

HE DIDN'T SEND ME!

BESIDES, WHY THE *HELL* WOULD I BE FOLLOWING ORDERS FROM CYCLOPS?

OF COURSE. INSTEAD, YOU'LL JUST LEAVE YOUR *FRIENDS* AND FOLLOW SOME MADE-UP SECRET SOCIETY.

THE SOCIETY OF THE ETERNAL DAWN HAS EXISTED FOR DECADES. I MADE MY CHOICE, JUST LIKE *YOU*.

I DON'T TRUST THEM.

THEN TRUST *ME*. YOU TRUST CAL, AND HIS GRANDMOTHER WAS PART OF THE SAME ORGANIZATION.

THAT WAS INHERITED. HOW DID THEY FIND YOU?

"WE CROSSED PATHS AFTER KRAKOA. THEY KNEW I HAD EXPERIENCE FIGHTING SUPERNATURAL THREATS AND ASKED ME TO JOIN.

"REMEMBER WHEN WE TOOK DOWN THE ***DEMON BEAR*** THAT HAD BEEN HAUNTING MY FAMILY?

"THE ORDER'S MISSION HITS CLOSE TO HOME. I'M HERE TO PROTECT THE SEALS.

"THE DAWN'S ONLY GOAL IS TO PREVENT IMPENDING APOCALYPSES."

THEN WHY NOT ***PREVENT*** LIMINAL'S RISE?

LIMINAL HAS BEEN STOPPED BEFORE. BUT HE'S ACTED ***QUICKER*** THAN EXPECTED, AND OUR NUMBERS ARE LIMITED.

MUTANT BLOOD CONTAINS MORE ENERGY THAN HUMANS. WITH THE MODERN PROLIFERATION OF MUTANTS, HE CAN BREAK HIS SEALS WITH FEWER SACRIFICES.

I EXPECTED BETTER, DANI. YOU WEREN'T SUSPICIOUS AT ALL?

WHAT IF THE SOCIETY HAD KNOWN WHAT WAS COMING? WHAT IF I COULD HAVE HELPED PREVENT KRAKOA'S FALL?

WITH THE DAWN, I CAN HAVE THE MOST ***IMPACT***, MAKING SURE OUR COMMUNITIES ARE SAFE. I CAN USE THEIR KNOWLEDGE TO OUR ***ADVANTAGE***.

THE PERKS ARE NICE TOO. THEIR ENCHANTED PEACH-WOOD BOW AMPLIFIES MY X-GENE.

DAWN PIERCER TRANSFORMS MY PSIONIC ARROWS TO REPEL DEMONS.

BOOOM

ARE YOUR STEPPING DISCS STILL ACTING UP?

WOULD I *STILL* BE ON THIS GONDOLA IF THEY WERE BACK TO NORMAL? LIMINAL'S ENERGY IS *SPREADING*--AFFECTING MY POWERS.

CAL WOULD BE WITH US IF I THOUGHT I COULD EVACUATE HIM IF NEEDED. WE NEED A PLAN.

HOOK AND DAGGER?

=SNORT= HOOK AND DAGGER? STILL SUCH A BAD MANEUVER NAME.

YOU TRY COMING UP WITH A BETTER ONE AT SIXTEEN.

RIGHT. YOU'LL *NEVER* TOP IT.

"WE *DEFINITELY* PEAKED IN HIGH SCHOOL."

FOR A MOMENT, IT FEELS LIKE NOTHING HAS CHANGED. NORMALLY, THAT WOULD *TERRIFY* ME.

BUT FIGHTING ALONGSIDE DANI FEELS LIKE COMING *HOME*.

HOWEVER, I CAN'T AFFORD TO STAY IN THAT FEELING. I *WON'T* RISK HER SAFETY. DANI *NEEDS* TO LEAVE.

IS THAT--?

YEP.

SEA SHY

AHHHHHHH!!!

WOOSH

SWING

WELL, THAT WAS FUN.

WE NEED TO MOVE. LIMINAL'S INFLUENCE IS SPREADING, AND THE FOREST IS TAKING ON DEMONIC QUALITIES.

ALREADY, THE LOCAL RESEARCHERS WERE DRIVEN FROM THIS MOUNTAIN. THE MUTANTS AMONG THEM WERE BEING SPECIFICALLY TARGETED.

LET'S GET TO THE SEAL AND FAST.

BLEH! I HATE HIKING!

NO, YOU DON'T. YOU'RE JUST IN A BAD MOOD.

COME ON. THERE'S A PATH IN THE CLEARING UP AHEAD.

THESE ARE SYMBOLS OF OLD MAGIC. THE SEAL IS CLOSE.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITHOUT ME?

APPARENTLY *DIE.*

IT WAS A *JOKE*, YANA.

YOU'RE NOT THE LEADER OF THE NEW MUTANTS ANYMORE, DANI. I WAS HANDLING THIS MISSION JUST FINE ON MY OWN.

I'M NOT AN *IDIOT*, DANI. I DON'T NEED YOU TELLING ME LIMINAL'S DEAL WAS BAD. I KNOW.

I CAN DEFEAT HIM AND CONTROL DARKCHILD ON MY OWN. YOU CAN *LEAVE* NOW, EVEN IF YOU DON'T TRUST ME.

MY TRUST? YOU SAID SOMETHING SIMILAR BEFORE. I DON'T UNDERSTAND--

rustle

SKREEE

GROWL

HOLD THEM OFF. I'LL *EVEN* THE FIGHT.

Crescent

IT DIDN'T WORK?!

I SHOULD HAVE FORESEEN THAT SUPPRESSING DARKCHILD WOULD WREAK HAVOC ON MY MAGIC. SHE'S MORE *INTERTWINED* WITH MY SOUL THAN EVER BEFORE.

NO!

THAT ALMOST *HIT* ME!

SPELLS TOO POWERFUL. SPELLS TOO WEAK. WHAT *ELSE* DID I OVERLOOK?

FOCUS! GET BEHIND ME.

IN THIS MOMENT, DANI IS A HUNTER. AND AN ANIMAL'S FIRST INSTINCT IS TO *FEAR* THE ARROW.

HHHH...

...HOOO...

WITH HER MUTANT ABILITY, DANI CREATES ILLUSIONS OF HER OPPONENTS' GREATEST FEARS.

AND PAIRED WITH HER PSIONIC ARROWS...

HOW COULD THE BEASTS HOPE TO TELL WHICH ARROW IS REAL? WHICH TO DODGE? WHICH TO TAKE?

ESCAPE BECOMES *IMPOSSIBLE*. A STACKED GAME OF RUSSIAN ROULETTE.

AAAAIEEEE!!!

YOU'RE *TERRIFYING.*

AW. THAT'S THE *NICEST* THING YOU'VE EVER SAID TO ME.

YOU MIGHT WANT ME TO LEAVE, ILLYANA, BUT I *WON'T* UNTIL WE WARD LIMINAL'S SEAL. WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S AFFECTING YOUR MAGIC.

I STILL HAVE MY SOULSWORD. THIS IS *MY* FIGHT, DANI, NOT YOURS.

STOP PROTESTING. THINK OF IT LIKE OLD TIMES.

ACTUALLY... LET'S NOT. DO YOU REMEMBER THE TROUBLE WE GOT INTO?

BUT I SUPPOSE WE COULD *ALWAYS* OUTDO OURSELVES.

I RECOGNIZE THAT *DEMON* FROM THE *DREAM* LIMINAL SHOWED ME. THE MAGE RESPONSIBLE FOR LIMINAL'S FORCED CREATION.

INCORPORATED INTO HIS ARMY. A *PUNISHMENT* OF ETERNAL SERVITUDE FOR THE SLIGHT AGAINST A NEWLY CROWNED GODCHILD.

I HAD HOPED WE WERE REMOTE ENOUGH THAT LIMINAL'S GENERAL LACKED *MUTANT* BLOOD. I NEED TO GET THOSE *MUTANT RESEARCHERS* AWAY FROM HER.

DESPITE HAVING THESE MUTANTS AT THE READY, I WAS TOLD TO WAIT FOR YOU BOTH.

SACRIFICING A NEWLY RECRUITED SOCIETY MEMBER WOULD BE A FITTING WAY TO BREAK THE SEAL. YOUR *FRIEND*, NO LESS.

I CAN'T *WAIT* TO MAKE YOU WATCH.

I *DARE* YOU TO COME AT ME. I'LL ENJOY IT.

≑GASP!≑

DON'T LET HER GET IN YOUR HEAD, YANA. LIKE YOU SAID--

--WE'RE *TERRIFYING* WHEN WE WANT TO BE.

ECK!

YOU WILL NOT WIN THIS BATTLE. I WILL NOT FACE MY MASTER'S RAGE.

DING

SHE REMOVED OUR GRAVITY!

SHE'S GOING FOR THE SEAL!

FWISH

ECK

THUD

KILL THE OTHERS. I WILL ENSURE THE SEAL'S DESTRUCTION.

I SHOULD HESITATE. I *KNOW* THE CHOICE I SHOULD MAKE. LIMINAL *CANNOT* BE FREE.

BUT THERE WAS NEVER A CHOICE AT ALL.

SLASH

FT FT FT

NO!

YOU SHOULD LEARN LIMINAL'S WILL IS INEVITABLE. HE REFUSES ANYTHING LESS.

ДУРАК!

WHY CAN'T I DO THIS?!

ANOTHER SEAL FALLS. LIMINAL'S POWER GROWS AND, WITH IT, DARKCHILD'S INFLUENCE.

ANGER BOILS OVER. AT LIMINAL. AT THIS *SITUATION*. BUT MOST OF ALL...AT *MYSELF*.

HA. WE ALWAYS END RIGHT BACK HERE, DON'T WE? STUCK IN THE SAME PATTERN.

FACED WITH OUR *REAL* SELVES. YOU WERE RIGHT NOT TO TRUST ME.

NO!

YOU HAVE ALWAYS FACED *IMPOSSIBLE* SITUATIONS. TOO MUCH FOR MOST TO HANDLE. BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS MADE THE BEST CHOICE YOU COULD.

I DO TRUST YOU, ILLYANA!

BUT ULTIMATELY, *YOU* NEED TO TRUST YOURSELF!

YOU'VE NEVER LET OTHERS DEFINE WHAT OR WHO YOU ARE!

DON'T START NOW.

I'M *CURIOUS*. WHAT WILL YOU DO?

SLASH!

HI, LIMINAL. ARE YOU WATCHING? IT'S MY TURN TO PLAY NOW!

I *CAN'T* KEEP HOLDING THE SEALS SHUT MYSELF, STRAINING TO MAINTAIN BARRIERS AROUND THEM. IF I *SLIP* ONCE, THEY'LL *REOPEN.*

HOWEVER, WITH DARKCHILD'S POWER, I EASILY WARD THE SEAL. MY MAGIC *SINGS.*

AND DARKCHILD IS QUIET. IT'S OVER. I *FINALLY* HAVE CONTROL.

PLEASE. WE'RE NOT DONE.

NO! YOU HAVE NO POWER OVER ME!

WE BOTH KNOW THAT'S NOT TRUE. YOU ARE NOT *IGNORANT,* ILLYANA.

REMEMBER. YOU ARE IN CONTROL.

CALM YOURSELF. AND TRUST THAT IF YOU *FALTER,* I WILL *ALWAYS* BE THERE TO PICK YOU BACK UP.

I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE, DANI.

I'VE MISSED YOU, YANA.

LATER.
BASE CAMP
ECUADOR.

THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT?

I ESCAPED LIMBO. WE PUT MADELYNE PRYOR IN CONTROL BUT IT'S THE ***SAME*** CYCLE. WHAT IF I'M FOREVER DOOMED TO REPEAT MY PAST?

WHAT IF LIMBO PUT A ***FUNDAMENTAL*** FLAW IN ME...?

QUIT THAT. YOU'RE ONE OF MY OLDEST FRIENDS. I ***KNOW*** YOU.

YOU ARE A ***GOOD*** PERSON. NOT IN SPITE OF YOUR PAST, BUT ***BECAUSE*** OF YOUR PAST.

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ME. I'LL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR YOU.

THAT'S WHAT ***FRIENDS*** ARE FOR-- EVEN WHEN THEY DISAGREE WITH ONE ANOTHER. THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'VE EVER ***STOPPED*** TRUSTING YOU.

THANKS, DANI.

CLINK

NOW, LET'S SEE IF WE CAN'T COME UP WITH A PLAN TO DEFEAT LIMINAL.

I'M SCARED, DANI. I WEAKEN WITH EACH SEAL I WARD AND DARKCHILD ONLY GROWS IN POWER.

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH ***LONGER*** I CAN DO THIS.

WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT, YANA. I PROMISE. WE JUST NEED ***TIME***.

LATER THAT NIGHT.

SO, YOU'RE IN THIS SAME *SOCIETY* THAT MY GRANDMA WAS IN. DID YOU KNOW HER?

NO, MOST OF US WORK ALONE. BUT THERE'S A *COUNCIL* THAT GUIDES OUR ACTIONS.

THE SOCIETY DOESN'T BELIEVE *DISASTERS* WILL NEVER OCCUR, BUT THEY WORK TO PREVENT THEM OR BRING ABOUT THEIR END. *USHERING* IN A NEW DAWN.

THAT IS WHY I HAVE TO ASK THIS OF YOU, CAL. ILLYANA *TRUSTS* YOU. AND I *TRUST* HER.

BUT I DO NOT *TRUST* THE DARKCHILD. AND I HAVE NO CLUE HOW MUCH INFLUENCE IT NOW HOLDS OVER HER.

I NEED YOU TO WATCH OVER ILLYANA.

WATCH OVER HER? YOU MEAN *SPY* ON HER.

IF YOU TRUST HER, WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

ILLYANA IS ONE OF MY OLDEST FRIENDS.

BUT THAT MEANS I'VE SEEN HER LOSE HERSELF TO DARKCHILD, *DESPITE* HER BEST EFFORTS. I'VE SEEN THE *CONSEQUENCES*.

I WANT TO *PROTECT* MY FRIEND. IF I NEED TO PLAN AHEAD TO DO SO, I *WILL*.

SHOULDN'T YOU TELL ILLYANA? SHE WANTS THE SAME THING.

NO. I CAN'T. ILLYANA IS TOO INDEPENDENT. SHE'D *MISINTERPRET* MY INTENT. IF SHE EVEN HEARD ME SAY THIS TO YOU--

--SHE'D NEVER *TRUST* ME AGAIN.

#5

"FATE UNBOUND"

CAUSEWAY COAST, IRELAND.

MAGIK AND I WILL FLANK THE RUINS. WE'LL WARD LIMINAL'S *FINAL SEAL* BEFORE HIS GENERALS CAN ATTACK.

CAL WILL STAY BEHIND TO EVACUATE ANY STRAGGLERS. *ONLY* IF IT'S SAFE.

YEAH, YEAH. I HEAR YOU.

THIS PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE IS DECEIVING. I KNOW THAT THE PRESENCE OF THESE MUTANT FARMERS IS NO COINCIDENCE.

ILLYANA?

YOU NEED TO PAY ATTENTION.

DOES IT MATTER? *YOU* SEEM TO HAVE IT COVERED--

WHOOSH

IT'S THE MAGE RESPONSIBLE FOR LIMINAL'S CREATION.

NOW FORCED TO SERVE AS HIS DEMONIC GENERAL.

CLK

CLK

CLK

AAAAH!

WE'RE TOO LATE. IF SHE'S HERE, THE GRAVITY DEMON MUST BE CLOSE BEHIND.

SSZZL

GOOD THING YOU'RE *ALL* FOR *PLAN B's*, DANI. THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE.

WE'LL REGROUP AT THE RUINS.

ARM OF PHORCYS.

SHRIEK

WHAT DO WE DO?!

BUT--

YOU STAY HERE. SAFE.

DON'T WORRY, CAL. DANI WILL STILL BE THERE TO *SPY* ON ME.

CRAP. ILLYANA--

I DON'T MEAN TO HOLD DANI'S OR CAL'S WORDS AGAINST THEM. *DARKCHILD* IS A *THREAT*. I KNOW THAT INTIMATELY.

MAGIK! STALL THE FLAME DEMON. WE'LL DIVIDE THEM THEN ATTACK.

IF THE GRAVITY DEMON WANTS A ROUND TWO, I'D BE HAPPY TO OBLIGE.

YET THEIR DISTRUST *HURTS*. IT SOLIDIFIES MY GREATEST *FEARS*...

DARKCHILD MUST BE *DESTROYED* IF I'M TO HAVE ANY CHANCE AT NORMALCY.

YOU THINK I WOULDN'T BE PREPARED FOR THE SAME TRICK?

YANK

I PREFER A DIFFERENT SORT OF OPPONENT. LET'S SWITCH.

CLK CLK CLK

THUD

A BETTER MATCHUP. DON'T YOU AGREE, DEAR?

CLANG

YOU PICKED THE *WRONG* DAY TO MESS WITH ME. I'M *ALREADY* IN A BAD MOOD.

BUT SURPRISINGLY, *YOU'RE* NOT THE ONE WHO CAUSED IT.

THUD

DING

I UNDERSTAND DANI'S BACKUP PLAN. WHAT HURTS IS THAT SHE DIDN'T TRUST ME WITH IT...

DO YOU WANT TO SAY *SOMETHING* TO ME, MAGIK?

...WHEN I *TRUST* HER.

CRACK

SKID

YOU'RE ANGRY--

YOU THINK?

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS.

AUGM!

FT FT

BOOM

≑HUFF≑ ≑HUFF≑ ≑HUFF≑

LITTLE MUTANT. LITTLE SACRIFICE--

YANK

MY, MY... DOES ONE MUTANT WARRANT YOUR THEATRICS?

NO. PLEASE--

THAT IS NOT ENOUGH BLOOD TO BREAK MY SEAL. HOW DISAPPOINTING.

YOU TWO, OUT OF ALL MY HORDE, SHOULD KNOW THAT RITUALS REQUIRE SACRIFICE.

AND, ALAS, I'M PERSONALLY NOT WILLING TO MAKE IT. BUT YOU?

I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH OF MY PAST, BUT I KNOW YOU TWO WERE THE MAGES WHO TOOK ME FROM MY HOME.

YOU USED ME IN AN AMPLIFICATION RITUAL TO GAIN POWER, BUT YOUR SPELL WAS RISKY. IT *SHOULD* HAVE BACKFIRED ONTO YOU.

YOU WERE LUCKY THAT IT BACKFIRED ONTO ME.

IT'S FITTING THAT I MUST RISK THE SAME SPELL TO PRY MY FREEDOM FROM THE SPECK OF MUTANT BLOOD YOU'VE SECURED.

CRACK

IF I SUCCEED, YOUR DEATHS WILL USHER IN MY FREEDOM AT THE VERY PLACE I WAS BORN.

HOW POETIC.

FINALLY, YOU PAY YOUR DUES.

SPLAT

JUNEAU, ALASKA.

TOKYO, JAPAN.

CLOUD FOREST, ECUADOR.

MY HORDE HUNGERS FOR MY FREEDOM. TODAY WILL BE MY REVELATION.

AAGHAHHH!

WHEN A MAGICAL SPELL BREAKS, PAIN IS REFLECTED ONTO THE CASTER. FOR WARDS AS COMPLICATED AS THESE, LIMINAL SHATTERING THREE SEALS IS AGONIZING.

DARKCHILD SEIZES ON MY WEAKNESS AND PAIN.

AT LAST.

IT WAS EASY TO FORGET THAT MY PRISON WAS A HOLLOW COPY OF THIS WORLD. NO MORE.

IT DOES ME GOOD TO RETURN TO MY BIRTHPLACE.

SPEAKING OF, I BELIEVE YOUR THREE WEEKS ARE UP, ILLYANA.

I KNOW IT HURTS, BUT WE NEED TO MOVE! HOLD ON, MAGIK.

HOLD ON? I'VE BEEN HOLDING ON MY ENTIRE LIFE. THIS FORCED TRANSFORMATION IS PAINFUL, AND I JUST WANT TO REST.

FOR ONCE, I JUST *WANT* TO REST.

BEAUTIFUL.

LET GO OF ME, DANI!

RIP

CRACK

YOU DARE TO HARM ME?!

NO! I REFUSE. YOU WILL NOT TAKE OVER!

I'M ALREADY PRESENT. THERE'S NO TURNING BACK.

I WILL FIGHT YOU! I WILL NEVER STOP. EVEN IF I HAVE TO USE THIS PAIN TO STAY PRESENT.

STAB

STILL RESISTING? WHILE IMPRESSIVE, THAT WON'T DO.

LET'S NOT INTERFERE.

LIKE HELL I'M GOING TO LET THAT HAPPEN.

MIRAGE!

GET OUT OF HERE! IT'S NOT SAFE! YOU'RE A LIABILITY IN THIS FIGHT!

SHE ÷PANT÷ SHE--

MAGIK HEARD. SHE HEARD US THE OTHER NIGHT.

OF COURSE SHE DID. I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, 'YANA. WE ***NEED*** TO TALK, EVEN IF WE BOTH'D RATHER ***AVOID*** THIS SUBJECT.

DARKCHILD ***TERRIFIES*** ME. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, SHE STILL ***HAUNTS*** ME. LIKE SHE ***SCARES*** YOU. YET, SOMEHOW, ILLYANA, YOU ***PERSEVERE*** THROUGH THAT TERROR.

I ASKED CAL TO WATCH YOU BECAUSE LIMINAL MADE YOU DOUBT THAT YOU COULD PERSEVERE. BUT YOU'VE NEVER LET OTHERS CONTROL YOU.

DON'T LET LIMINAL DEFINE WHO YOU ARE, ILLYANA. NOT YOUR PAST. NOT YOUR PRESENT.

"NOT YOUR FUTURE."

FINALLY, WE MEET FACE-TO-FACE. IN YOUR--NO-- OUR MIND.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

AH!

YOU DESTROYED MY LIFE! MY SECOND CHANCE!

AND I'M GOING TO RIP THAT LOOK OFF YOUR SMUG FACE!

WHY ARE YOU SO CALM?!

WHO IS THERE TO DIRECT OUR ANGER AGAINST?

I HAVE IMPRISONED YOU FOR YEARS. SHACKLED YOU TO THE DEEPEST DEPTHS OF MYSELF.

WHY WOULD I DIRECT MY FUROR AT MYSELF?

MYSELF? I AM NOT YOU. I DID NOT ASK FOR YOU.

YOU LEECH OFF ME AND CORRUPT EVERYTHING GOOD IN MY LIFE.

IS THAT REALLY HOW YOU SEE ME? AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?

YES, IT'S TRUE. I WAS BORN IN LIMBO. YOU WERE NOT.

FOR WHAT PURPOSE, ILLYANA, WAS I CREATED? TO BE A TOOL FOR OTHERS? NO. I AM A TOOL TO PROTECT YOU.

YET YOU CHOOSE TO SUPPRESS RATHER THAN CONFRONT. YOU DO NOT ALLOW ME TO SHOULDER THOSE DARKER MEMORIES.

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, YOUR MENTAL BARRIERS ARE FULLY DOWN. AND I HAVE ONE MESSAGE FOR YOU, ILLYANA...

...I AM YOU.

IN LIMBO, LIKE MOST DEMONIC REALMS, DEALS ARE CURRENCY. *WORDS* HOLD POWER.

SUBVERSION AND INTERPRETATION IS A *LANGUAGE* UPON ITSELF.

LIMINAL THOUGHT HE KNEW MY *TRUE FORM*. BASED OUR CONTRACT ON HIS SURETY.

YET THE PERCEPTION OF SELF IS AN *INTERNAL* TRUTH. ONE FOR ME TO DECIDE.

I'VE BEEN RUNNING FROM MY PAST. FROM THE EVILS I ENDURED IN LIMBO.

WHILE I STILL WISH TO *AVOID* IT, DARKCHILD'S WORDS DO RING CLEAR.

SHE *PROTECTED* ME BEFORE... EVEN IF THE REACTIONS WERE OVERBLOWN. HOWEVER, I ALWAYS DO HAVE A TENDENCY TO *SUPPRESS*, AND PRESSURE BUILDS.

PERHAPS WE CAN CARVE A *NEW FUTURE* TOGETHER.

I, ILLYANA RASPUTINA, WILL *DEFINE* MY OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH MY PAST.

MY PAST WILL NOT *CONTROL* ME, JUST AS LIMINAL WILL NOT *COMMAND* ME.

HUNTRESS, YOUR WORDS WILL NOT REACH HER. YOU HAVE MADE SURE THAT I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO *UNDERSTANDS* ILLYANA IN WHOLE.

AND POOR LITTLE MAGE. COME TO *AVENGE* HIS BLOODLINE. YET HE SEEMS TO LACK ANY MAGICAL POWER OF HIS OWN.

SHUT UP!

AUXILIUM MANUS!

FLIMSY CRAFTSMANSHIP. STILL...

...HOW IS IT THAT *YOUR* BLOODLINE WAS ABLE TO *IMPRISON* ME FOR CENTURIES?!

ILLYANA?! WAIT...THE *DARKCHILD* UNLEASHED?!

SHOW-OFF.

ANOTHER LESSON TO YOU, CAL. *PROPHECIES* ARE UP TO INTERPRETATION.

HA! SO I GUESS YOU *WERE* LISTENING.

I COULD NEVER IGNORE YOU FOR LONG.

SHE BROKE OUT OF THE COCOON...THE TRANSFORMATION MUST BE COMPLETE.

WE ARE ONE AND THE SAME. TOGETHER, WE WILL *TRANSFORM* THIS WORLD.

FINALLY, YOU ACCEPT YOUR *TRUE* SELF.

HA-HAHAHA-HA...

LIMBO WAS MY HOME, AND I *BONDED* TO IT. YOU THINK I WOULDN'T DO THE SAME TO *EARTH?*

I DON'T *TOLERATE* CLAIMS TO MY *DOMAIN.*

SPLASH

I AM IN FULL *CONTROL* OF MYSELF, LIMINAL. IN FACT, I'M *GRATEFUL* TO YOU IN A WAY.

YOU FORCED US TO TALK. WHAT A *FEAT.*

YOU THINK YOU'RE IN CONTROL? HA, WHAT A *JOKE.* MY DOMAIN IS SPREADING. EARTH *BENDS* TO MY WILL.

MY SEALS HAVE NOT JUST FALLEN--THEY HAVE *SHATTERED.*

YOU SEEM TO THINK YOU'RE THE ONE *LEADING* THIS CONVERSATION.

CRACK

I *DARE* YOU TO KILL ME. MY DOMAIN IS TOO *INTERTWINED* WITH EARTH'S MAGIC. IF I PERISH, YOUR WORLD WILL *UNRAVEL.*

ACCEPT THAT YOU'VE LOST. *FALL* INTO LINE.

NO.

[illegible]

DANI! THIS WON'T HOLD HIM FOR LONG. WE NEED A SOLUTION AND *FAST.*

LIMBO?

HE FORGED A CONNECTION WITH ME. I DON'T WANT TO TEST IF THAT EXTENDS TO LIMBO AND ITS DEMONS.

I KNOW A WAY. LIKE LIMINAL SAID, THE ORIGINAL SEAL WAS MADE WITH MY FAMILY'S BLOOD--

ABSOLUTELY NOT. YOU ARE NOT A TOOL TO FORGE THE SEAL.

I WILL ABSORB LIMINAL INTO MYSELF. I'VE HELD DARKCHILD AT BAY FOR ALL THESE YEARS.

BUT YOU'RE FINALLY *FREE.* BESIDES, THE SEAL IS MORE EFFECTIVE WITH MY BLOODLINE. I'M WILLING--

YOU ARE A CHILD. YOU DO NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO MAKE THIS DECISION.

I WILL BECOME THE SEAL.

EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, I TRIED TO MAKE UP FOR THE EVILS THAT OCCURRED AROUND ME IN LIMBO.

EVILS THAT I NOW REALIZED I SUBCONSCIOUSLY BLAMED ON MYSELF.

NO LONGER. KNOW THAT YOU *DESERVE* A CHILDHOOD, CAL. NORMALCY.

SO DO YOU!

AND I WILL. I KNOW THIS NOW.

I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS, ILLYANA! ESPECIALLY IF IT RISKS YOU BEING CORRUPTED AGAIN!

THUD

CAL, NOOOO!!!

AIIIEEEE!

SHRIEK

FWASSH

CAL?! CAL!!!

HE DID IT. HE ACTUALLY TRAPPED LIMINAL WITHIN HIMSELF.

ГЛУПЫЙ! HE *WANTED* TO SACRIFICE HIMSELF.

HE *WANTED* TO PROTECT *YOU*.

IS THAT AN ACCUSATION?

IT'S A REALITY. ONE THAT YOU IGNORED BECAUSE YOU WERE FOCUSED ON YOUR *OWN* BATTLE.

FOR GOOD REASON--

MAYBE. STILL, CAL NEEDED A MENTOR...NOT SOMEONE TO *BLINDLY* FOLLOW AFTER.

I'M GOING TO TAKE CAL BACK TO THE SOCIETY HQ.

I'LL COME WITH--

NO. YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE, ILLYANA. I FOLLOWED YOUR *LEAD*, AND THIS IS WHERE WE ENDED UP.

IT'S *MY* TURN NOW.

THAT'S NOT FAIR, DANI.

I'VE BEEN FAIR. I'VE BEEN SUPPORTIVE. BUT *LEADERSHIP* MEANS PUTTING THE *NEEDS* OF YOUR TEAM ABOVE YOUR OWN.

YOU CAN'T KEEP ACTING *ALONE* AND RUNNING IN BLIND.

IF YOU DO, YOU'RE GOING TO KEEP *HURTING* THE ONES YOU LOVE.

MIDNIGHT.

THE FACTORY.
X-MEN HQ.
MERLE.
ALASKA.

=YAWN=

CLIK

ILLYANA!

YOU'RE BACK. IS EVERYTHING--?

DID THINGS NOT GO WELL WHILE YOU WERE AWAY?

I KNOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT. I STILL REMEMBER WHEN YOU FIRST CAME BACK TO EARTH.

I THINK I KNOW WHAT MIGHT CHEER YOU UP.

OH...

YOU SHOULD HAVE WOKEN ME UP, 'YANA. YOU'VE HELPED ME THROUGH MY NIGHTMARES. YOU PROMISED TO LET ME DO THE SAME.

Uncle
PANCAKE MIX

HOW MANY TEAMS HAVE WE BEEN ON TOGETHER? THREE? FOUR?

I LOSE COUNT BECAUSE I TRULY CAN'T IMAGINE A TEAM WITHOUT YOU.

YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD MY BACK. PUSHED ME TO BE A BETTER LEADER AND GROW INTO THE PERSON I AM TODAY.

FOR SOMEONE WHO SUPPOSEDLY LIKES TO BE ALONE, YOU'VE TOUCHED SO MANY LIVES, ILLYANA.

DESPITE EVERYTHING THAT HAS HAPPENED, YOU STILL CHOOSE TO GET BACK UP EVERYDAY.

TO CHOOSE KINDNESS TIME AND TIME AGAIN.

THINGS MIGHT SEEM BLEAK NOW, BUT YOU'RE NOT ALONE. YOU'LL GET THROUGH THIS.

YOU ALWAYS DO.

THIS TIME'S DIFFERENT.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I REALLY MESSED UP, SCOTT. AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

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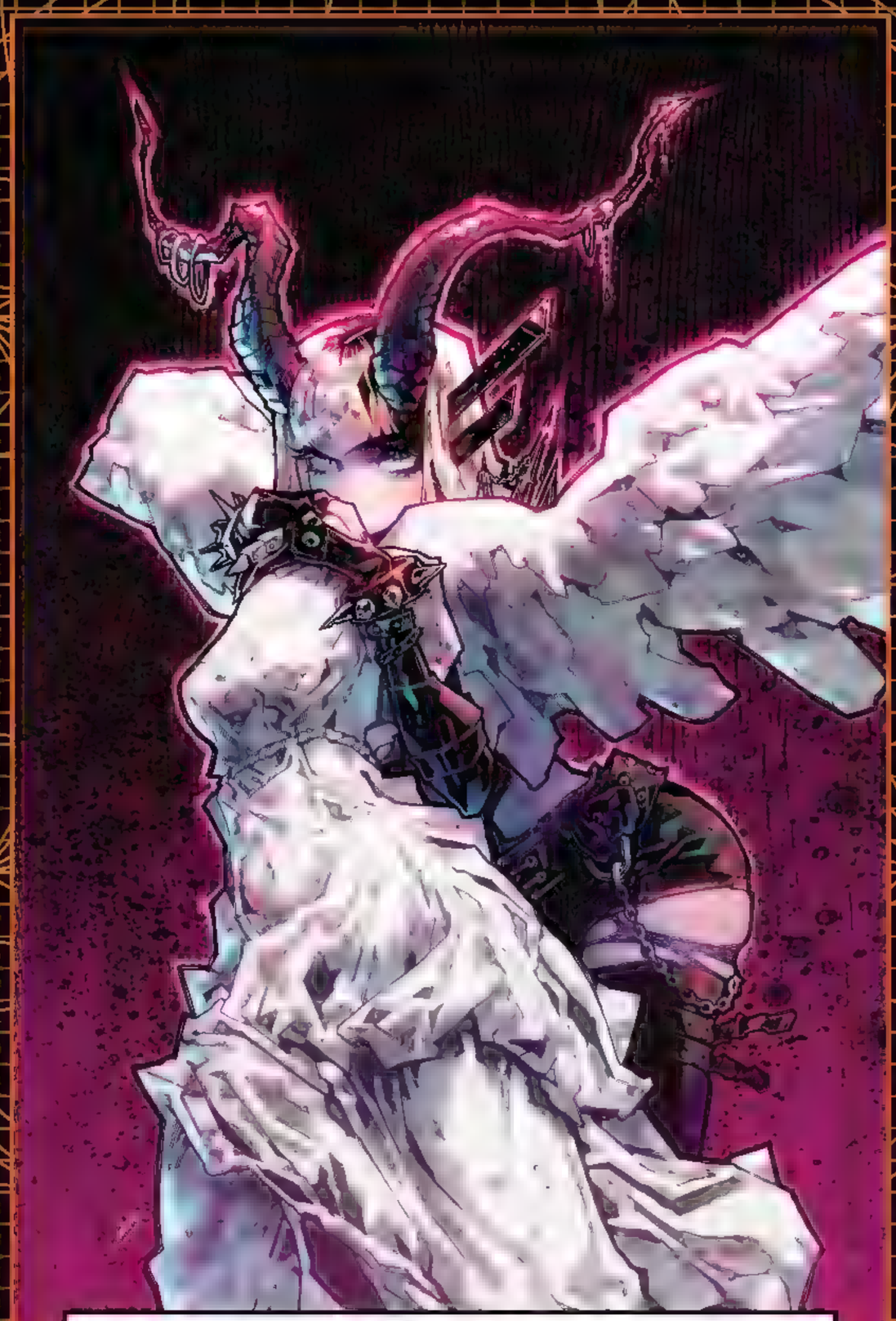

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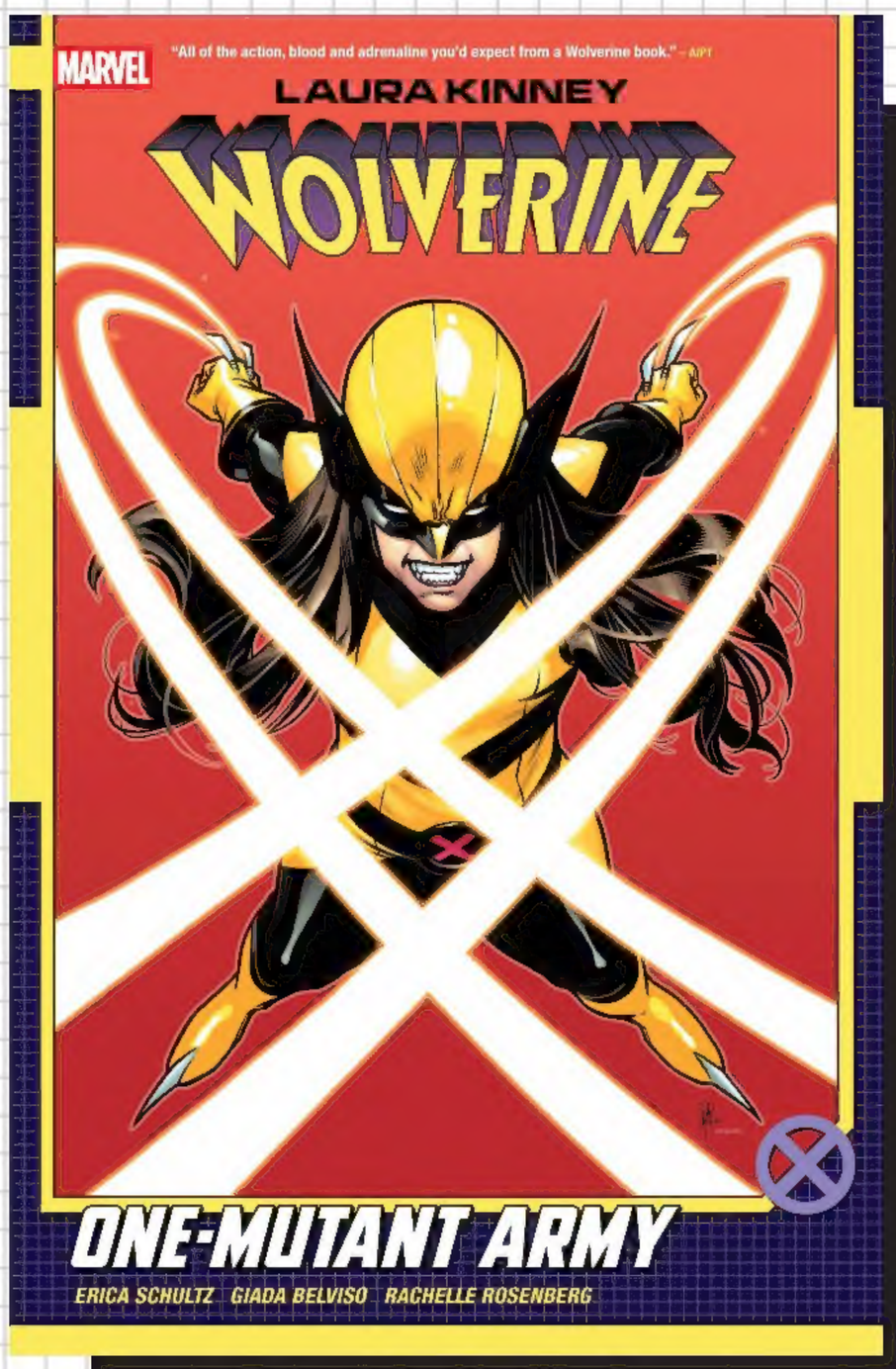
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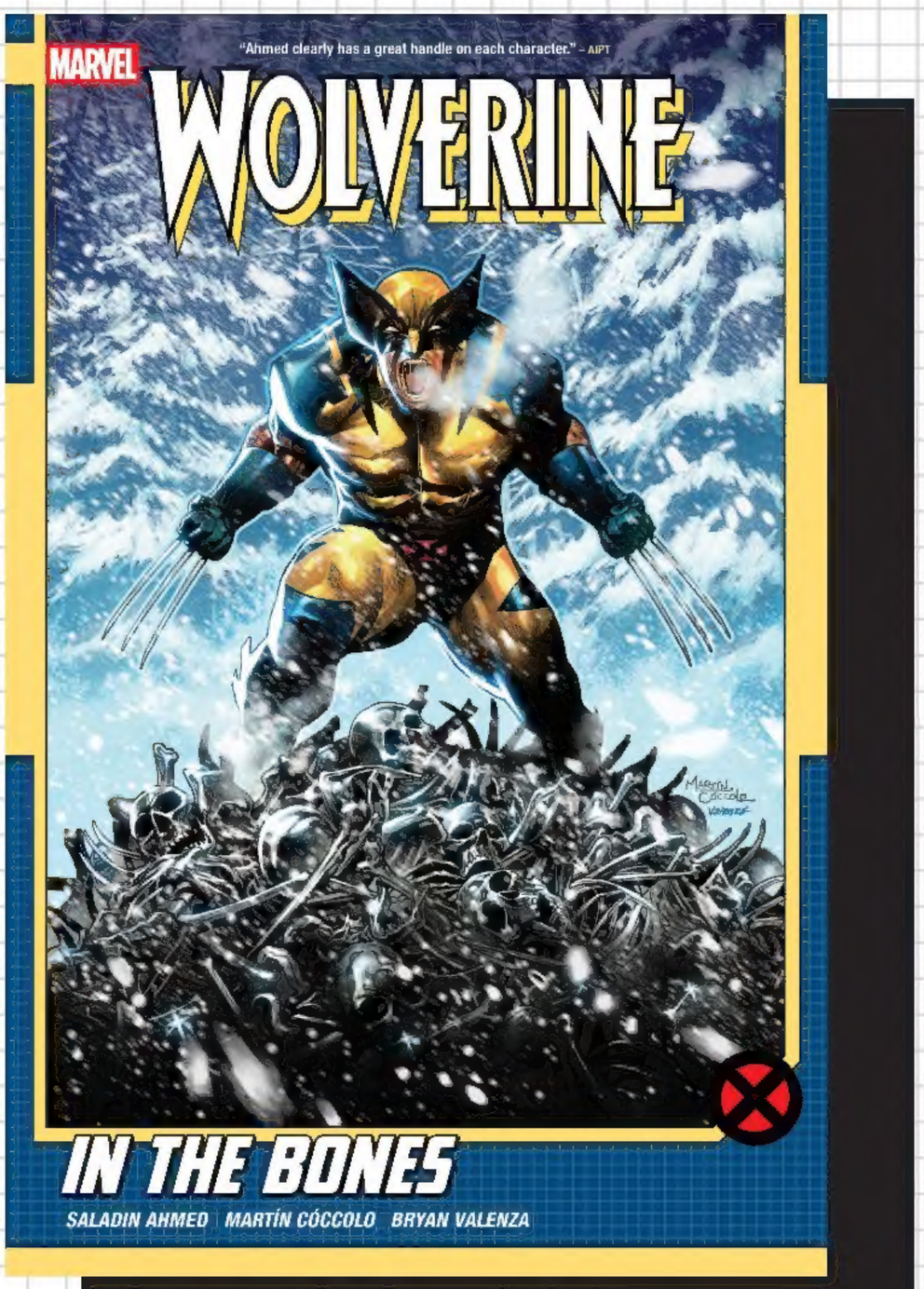
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